Questions and Responses to RFQ EXIM-08-Q-0022

1. Questions related to the description of the existing IIS system.

   a) The RFQ mentions 200 source tables with about 25 columns each. These sources are evidently to be used to support 17 Dashboards and about 200 reports. Can you provide any further information that would allow us to estimate, at least to an order of magnitude, the number and complexity of ETL jobs that this would entail?

   - Are we responsible for refreshing the 200 source tables?
   - How often are they refreshed?
   - How often is the DW to be refreshed?
   - Is there any information you can give us that would help us estimate the complexity of the transformations between source and target? (For example, a typical VB program that currently accomplishes such a task.)
   - Is there any information you can give us regarding the number of ETL jobs that will be necessary – at least to an order of magnitude?

   b) The RFQ states, "The current IIS and Hyperion reports have access to about 200 tables and views. These tables and views average about 25 columns each." Is the government willing to share the existing data model and/or additional detail regarding the data model? This information will assist vendors in providing more accurate and realistic cost estimates for this project (e.g., population of tables takes more development effort than creation of views).

   c) What are the size and transfer frequencies of the different data sources?

   d) What is the currently agreed upon SLA for system and data availability? What is the current time window in which data processing takes place (span of time between source data availability and start of required report availability)?

   The number of tables and columns mentioned in the RFQ is there to help provide a rough order of magnitude basis on which we expect potential bidders to base their estimates. Those numbers represent the number of tables and views that came into being over a number of years as a conglomeration of a large number of tables extracted from other operational systems without an overall guiding plan. The current system does not deal well with data integration issues.

   Our objective is not to simply continue using the old system, but to have the selected contractor design a new data warehouse using industry best practices. The selected contractor will work with the Bank to define the important business measures and the dimensions used for analysis of the data. The number of ETL jobs will be determined in relation to the proposed data model and source systems (5), to data warehouse transformation requirements, and to the number of life cycle events for a transaction and participant (such as submission, approval, rate changes, renewal, shipment, payment, claim, etc) and the financial end of month processes.

The existing data model is of limited value for sizing. The existing model will be used as a reference by the selected contractor to map data from the source systems to an entirely new data warehouse data model designed by the contractors. It will be the new data warehouse design that determines many of the remaining factors.

We can tell you that we expect the data warehouse to be refreshed daily, at a minimum. If solution allows data to be updated more frequently, that would be a plus. The size of the data transfers will be, to a large part, dependent on the data warehouse design the contractor develops. With IIS today, the nightly data extracts (flat files) are approximately 500MB. Another 430 MB comes in once a month after the monthly closing. Total space for the main IIS database now is approximately 4 GB.

2. How many months has the current production system been operational and could you estimate how many person months were required to build the current system?

   Assuming by the current production system that you're referring to IIS, it had been operational since about 1994 and it has continued to evolve ever since. No estimate of the amount of time required to build and maintain that system is available.

3. Are there specific use cases? No.

4. Questions impacted by Rehosting effort.

   a) We understand that the bank is in the process of re-hosting a number of operational systems from the mainframe and Adabas to Unix and Oracle. Will this be completed before the Business Intelligence project begins? Will the new DW need to regularly source from mainframe/Adabas, Unix/Oracle, or both. Will migration be required from mainframe/Adabas, Unix/Oracle or both?

   b) Will the IBM Mainframe applications written in Software AG's ADABAS/Natural that are currently being re-hosted to a Windows/Unix/Linux Oracle Platform be re-hosted in time for the schedule specified in the RFQ i.e., what is the impact on the stated schedule and the contractor's responsibility to adhere to the schedule if the applications are not re-hosted in time?

   c) What are the different types and counts of different data sources that will feed the Data Warehouse (e. g. Adabas, flatfiles, etc.) other than the IIS data store noted on page 8?

   We anticipate that the rehosting effort will be well underway, but not complete when this project begins. However, we believe the migrated data model will be in place in Oracle at that time and we should be able to use that to extract data for the pilot and for test purposes. The full rehosting project should be completed before the system is in operation. Our other major system that will feed the data warehouse is EXIM Online. It is also an Oracle-based system, so we anticipate that all the major data sources will be in Oracle.

If we run into any unanticipated delays in the rehosting project, we will, to the maximum extent possible, re-use the existing mainframe extract programs as the source for the data we need to load into the data warehouse to minimize the risk to the contractor's schedule. These are flat files. We do not anticipate that the selected contractor will have to develop any extracts from the mainframe/Adabas environment as part of this task order.

5. The RFQ states, "...one Lotus Notes application is retrieving data from the IIS C.3, Page 8 tables." Is it expected that this system will continue to source its data from IIS or does the Bank expect that the DW will need to feed this application?

   The Lotus Notes application queries the existing IIS system to retrieve data for display purposes. We anticipate that the same data will be available from the new data warehouse. The Lotus Notes application in question may need to be modified to query the data properly from the new system, but that modification is not a task under this task order. The Bank will make the required changes in the Lotus Notes application as the new interface and data elements are defined in the new system.

6. Does the EXIM Bank have a strong preference to use Hyperion or is the EXIM Bank completely open to using another tool (i.e., Cognos, Business Objects, etc.)?

   Although the Bank currently owns Hyperion licenses, we are not locked into that solution. We are open to the best all around solution proposed.

7. Questions pertaining to the size and quality of the data set:

   a) What is the current state of the quality and timeliness of data/information?

   b) What are the key performance indicators?

   c) What is the size of the data subset for section J.1.eIIS Matrix, Task 4? How many differing systems constitute the subset?

   The first task calls for the selected contractor to review the source systems and provide us with their assessment of the "current state of the information quality". It also asks for the contractor to "identify the important business measures that need to be contained in the data warehouse".

In the J.1.eIIS Matrix, Task 4, the RFQ states “The subset of data and reports to be developed for the pilot is identified and approved by the Bank.” We intend for the contractor to make that determination and to get our approval. The main purpose of this task is to demonstrate the range of functionality the selected contractor intends to deliver with the dashboard, but do it with a subset of our data so presentations of the pilot to Bank staff will be relevant. The pilot is basically a proof of concept of the proposed solution using a subset of real data.

8. Does the Ex-lm Bank have standards for data analysis/analytical reporting tools besides that of Hyperion? If so, what are they? If not, what are the current tools in use at the Ex-lm Bank?

   Additional reporting tools currently in use at the Bank include Microsoft Access, Microsoft Excel and Crystal Reports.

9. The RFQ states, "The Bank will supply the database and application servers that the new application servers will run on." For planning purposes, what specific hardware will be available for the development, test, and production systems that support this solution? Please include manufacturer, CPU (model, speed), RAM and operating system for all hardware to assist with pricing for software licenses.

   We can provide a Dell server running Windows 2003 or a Unix server for the initiative as needed. The server we are currently using to run Hyperion runs Windows 2003 Enterprise Edition SP 1. It is a Dell server, has 8 GB of RAM, and 4 Intel Xeon MP CPUs running at 2.70 GHz. The Oracle databases run Red Hat Linux Enterprise Edition and run on Dell 6650 servers with 16 GB of RAM and 2 Intel Xeon MP CPUs running at 2.70 GHz. Note that under our existing Oracle SmartBuy agreement, we are fully licensed for all of our internal employees and contractors. We would only have to get additional Oracle database licenses for applications exposed on the Internet.

10. What version of Microsoft SQL Server is currently used? Are they using Microsoft’s Analytical Services?

    IIS currently uses SQL Server 2000 SP 4. We are not using Microsoft’s Analytical Services. Note that our intention is that the new data warehouse be in Oracle 10g R2, not Microsoft SQL Server.

11. We are concerned that the security and privacy requirements of this project add an unknown multiplier into the project plan, and make it very difficult to calculate a plausible fixed-price bid. From your previous experience with these matters, can you give us an estimate of what percentage of our time will be taken up with security-related matters? Also, although the question above is specifically about control AC-7, there are 26 other controls about which similar questions may arise. Can you give us some general guidance about how these controls are to be applied?

The contractor's obligation will be to provide verbal and/or short written input to help the Bank's IT security officers document and test the IT security controls for securing the system. It should not take a large percentage of the contractor's time. The purpose is to help us conduct a "streamlined" security certification and accreditation for a non-major software application.

Regarding the controls listed in the RFQ, the Bank will actually apply the controls. The contractor is expected to propose secure or securable software products, make recommendations for secure hardware and for secure deployment of the system. The Bank expects any custom code that is required to develop the system will be developed using secure coding practices to eliminate exposure to application security vulnerabilities. For example, OWASP lists the top 10 web application threats (http://www.owasp.org/index.php/Top_10_2007). The Bank's security officers will document that these security controls are compliant with NIST 800-53, revision 2 guidelines, or we will develop compensatory controls, or the System Owner accepts the residual risk associated with non-compliance. The Bank's security officers need input from the contractor to clearly understand the new systems security model so they can adequately document the security controls.

12. What are the data archiving requirements?

Currently, we keep all the historical data we have available online. However, the contractor may find that we don't need to keep it all continuously available while analyzing the Bank's business requirements. If so, they can propose archiving the data we don't need to keep online as one method for keeping the system response times low. However, we do not know what those requirements might be until the requirements analysis is done.

13. Reference item 2) in the Changes to the RFI attachment to the RFQ customer letter, the Government states that "…the contractor only has to fill out the main column per task (the contractor does not have to fill out the lines by deliverables in the spreadsheet)". Please confirm that the Government intended to say that "…the contractor only has to fill out the main row per task (the contractor does not have to fill out the lines by deliverables in the spreadsheet)"; otherwise, please explain.

Correct. The contractor only has to fill out the main row per task.

14. Questions pertaining to Bank staff:

a) How many people, and what technical skills from EXIM will be available to the winning contractor?

b) What Ex-lm Bank staff will be committed to this project? Please describe both the project roles they will fill and their expected availability.

The Bank will have a Contracting Officer's Technical Representative (COTR) who will oversee the project. The contractor is expected to provide a technical project manager who will be responsible for developing strategies, architecture information, date models, plans and schedules for the project. The COTR will primarily review the project plan provided by the contractor, monitor progress on the contract so that the contractor stays on schedule, and insures that the deliverables meet the Bank's needs.

The Bank will have Oracle database administrators available who will manage the Bank's databases and will provided general support (setting up databases when needed, insuring backups are taken, etc.). They may take part in database design sessions to better understand the structure of the database being designed by the contractor.

The Bank will provide part time access to the Bank's subject matter experts along our major reporting lines who can help the contractor better understand the Bank's data and reporting needs. These subject matter experts will help review the deliverables to insure that they meet the Bank's needs.

The Bank systems engineering team will provide assistance in installing any products procured under this contract. The contractor will be expected to take the lead role in the installation. The systems engineering team will primarily provide the required access and will be there to insure they know how the software was installed and configured.

The Bank will provide part time access to the lead IIS developer and the lead developers of the operational systems to help the contractor obtain the necessary understanding of the source applications.

The Bank will also provide IT staff on a part time basis who will be participating on the project to learn the new technology. The contractor should not expect them to do development work while the initial build of the warehouse, dashboard, and reports are developed.

The Bank will provide part time access to the Bank's security officers who will be developing the system's certification and accreditation documents. The contractor will be expected to explain the systems security model to them.

15. Questions regarding the current data structure and current report usage:

a) Is the current data structure organized in a Star Schema or relational data model? Will the new system or implementation be required to maintain the new and old reports?

b) How many of the low usage [reports] may be eliminated? How many will require enhancements over [their] current presentation?

The current system is a collection of tables in a SQL Server database that come from a variety of sources, some relational and some not. It is not organized in a schema. We do not intend to keep this model though. The contractor is expected to develop a new data warehouse data model using industry best practices.

Regarding questions related to the number of reports that will be maintained or eliminated, those questions are not particularly relevant at this time. In the fixed price portion of the contract, the will be developing the dashboard and approximately 30 key reports. Many of the old reports were not being used and will be done away with entirely, but we don't know what the final set will be. The bidder is to base their fixed price estimates on the dashboard and the 30 key reports. Any other report development will be done under the maintenance task on the contract - which is a level of effort task and not included in the fixed price portion of the contract.

16. Can we get copies of the current schemas from the various applications that will continue to be used for the project?

We were somewhat unclear on what the questioner was after here. We do not intend to continue to use the current IIS schema. If the questioner was asking about the schemas for our operational databases, they are not available for public distribution.

17. Who is the incumbent?

The existing IIS system is maintained entirely by Bank employees.

18. Questions regarding Hyperion.

a) What components of Hyperion Performance Suite 8.5 are currently being used? Can you provide the version numbers for these components?

b) Ex-lm Bank has obtained Business Intelligence (BI) licenses from Hyperion. To C.3, Page 8 ensure that vendors utilize existing licenses and thus reducing the total cost of ownership (TCO) to the Ex-lm Bank, can the Government please provide which (1) Hyperion products within the product suite are available for this project and (2) for each of those products the number of licenses available for the project?

Hyperion Intelligence Designer and Hyperion Intelligence Web Client are in use. The version is 8.5 SP 2. We do run scheduled jobs that distribute their results via email to selected users. We have a limited number of Hyperion Intelligence

Designer licenses (1 or 2). The Hyperion Intelligence Web Client is licensed on a server-CPU basis, not a per-user basis, so all Bank employees could have access to the web client.

19. Can the government confirm that all data will come from source systems (i.e., no manual entry of performance metrics will be required?

We do not perform manual entry of performance metrics or scenario planning in the current system. But we cannot definitively rule out whether or not either of these will be necessary until the selected contractor has analyzed our business requirements.

20. Is scenario planning a requirement?

See response to item 19.

21. The RFQ states, "For planning purposes, the number of licenses needed for the C.5.2, Page10 first year for the dashboard solution should cover 25 users (including the developers). The cost for additional licenses (for a total of 400 licenses) needed to extend the dashboard to all Bank employees should also be identified in the proposal." Can Ex-lm Bank provide the breakdown of number of users by their usage profile? Examples of typical BI usage profiles are outlined below:

    Basic Users: Run prompted reports
    Power Users: Run prompted reports and conduct ad hoc analysis
    Advanced Developer: Users with advanced skills to develop reports and deploy them for basic and power users.
    Public Use[r]s: External users that can access authorized (a) static reports (e.g.: PDF and HTML) and (b) prompted reports.

Regarding public users, since we intend to make this an Internet application, we cannot predict the number of potential users. The proposed product should have a license type that allows for us to pay a fixed cost for the public-facing Internet application.

For the Bank's internal users, a preferred solution would allow all of our users to have the ability to develop reports via a web-based client much like our CPU-based Hyperion Intelligence web client does today. We would greatly prefer a web-based client over local PC desktop clients except where certain advanced features, like creating meta-data models, are not available via the web. If the software the bidder proposes does not support this type of license model, an allocation of 25% of the licenses to advanced developers, 50% to power users, and 25% to basic users would be acceptable.

22. Can Ex-lm Bank provide a detailed list of all the end-users of these reports (e.g.: CFO office, Congress, Chairman, etc)?

    Not really. Today, our reporting system is only open to employees within the Bank. Those employees may distribute reports externally to Congress or other sources. A primary use of the data is the production of our Annual Report. Note that the proposed system will expose a subset of the data on the Internet the external users can use to get answers to questions that they would normally submit Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) requests for.

23. Is the intended use to (1) support data marts and reports specific to businesses and processes or (2) collate information from many sources for strategic decision making?

    Both. We want the data warehouse to be able to answer the high-level strategic questions and be usable by our business divisions to make informed decisions about their business processes.

24. Questions regarding on-site work space.

    a) Will the Ex-Im Bank provide space and facilities for contractors to work onsite?

    b) How much office space will EXIM provide for the winning contractor?

    To the maximum extent possible, the Bank will provide space and facilities for the contractor to work on-site. If finding sufficient work space becomes a problem, we will provide other mechanisms for accessing the required systems using the Bank's VPN to allow those contractor employees who can work off-site to do so.

25. Will the pilot be operational and require support from the project team while the rest of the implementation is completed?

    Once the pilot is completed, we would like to keep it up and refreshed for demonstration purposes until the rest of the implementation is completed. However, we do not anticipate that any changes will be made to the pilot data model, ETL requirements, or reports after the pilot is completed.

26. Is there an existing Ex-lm Bank backup/offsite storage contract that the project can utilize? If so, can the Disaster Recovery plan be made available so that vendors can incorporation [into] this plan?

    Ex-Im Bank does have an existing backup/offsite storage contract. The contractor shall define processes and tools needed to provide the Bank with the ability to provide cold and hot backups of the system. The contractor is only providing a plan and associated proposed tools and is not required to implement them. Details needed by the winning contractor for incorporation into the contingency plan will be made available to them when needed, but they are not generally available now.

27. Is data cleansing a part of the project?

    Yes. The contractor is expected to identify key data elements to be loaded into the warehouse and identify where deficiencies exist in the data to be loaded into the warehouse so the Bank can correct the issues in the source systems. The contractor should develop, as part of the ETL process, routine edit checks that will quarantine and report on bad data before it gets into the warehouse so that the errors can be reconciled in the source systems and the corrected data can be resent to the warehouse. There should be a mechanism for the ETL controllers to allow data with problems to be inserted into the warehouse in unusual cases (such as older data for which a particular piece of source data was never collected).

    In addition, there will be similar data that comes from more than one source. The ETL process should be able to detect where mismatches occur between data coming from different systems and report on it so that the errors can be reconciled in the source systems and the corrected data can be resent to the warehouse.

Questions and Responses to RFQ EXIM-08-Q-0022

Administrative Questions

1. Are there any companies that are precluded from (1) priming or (2) being a subcontractor to a prime for this initiative due to their past or current involvement with Ex-lm Bank?

   No. Except consistent with federal law, contractors that are debarred or restricted from federal contracts or listed on the Excluded Parties List System are prohibited from award of federal contracts as either a prime or subcontractor. A list of excluded parties can be located at the following site. http://www.epls.gov

2. The RFQ states, "Fixed-Price task orders shall be invoiced upon completion of the TO." Several TOs span several months. Is the Bank open to pricing of work within a TO on a deliverable basis?

   Yes. Task orders and their payment terms will be negotiated per task order and in conformance with Section B para G.6

3. Separate from the Technical Approach, Page 2 of the instructions for submission ask the offeror to describe how it will manage the work to be completed (Management Plan). Page 1 does not identify the Management Plan as a separate section under proposal documents. Should the Management Plan be included in our response under Technical Approach or separate from it?

   Either one is acceptable.

4. The requirement that an offeror must quote against its GSA schedule unfairly restricts competition and may not result in the best overall value (price and other factors considered). It is requested that this restriction be removed from the procurement request. Given the stated scope and evaluation criteria, this vendor feels that an RFP would be a more appropriate procurement vehicle since this vendor believes an RFQ is typically used for the purchase of general commodities with an offer of award made to the lowest bidder. The scope does not involve general commodities and the evaluation methodology (reference Section 6 in Attachment J.11) clearly states evaluation factors other than cost with award to be based on best value.

   IAW Far Part 8.002(a)(2)(iii) Priorities for Use of Government Supply Sources. The Government is obligated to use GSA schedules as its option before soliciting offers from the open market. Use of the RFQ format is appropriate to Far Part 8.

5. Is there a page limit on the RFP response?

No. There is not a page limit in response to the RFQ. Offerors are required to submit their responses in accordance with Attachment J.11 titled "INSTRUCTIONS TO OFFERORS FOR PROPOSAL SUBMISSION, EVALUATION, AND AWARD." However, offerors are cautioned that responses must be tailored to the stated requirements of the RFQ and not be unnecessarily elaborate.

6. Concerning the cost spreadsheet, please clarify if there is a negative incentive (penalty).

   No negative incentive, penalties, or liquidated damages are contemplated. However, all customary contract remedies for late performance or substandard quality of deliverables shall apply.

The following questions were inadvertently omitted from the original Q&As and are now posted as of 4/23/08.

7. Instructions to Offerors state that the optional task (Task 7) is to maintain system for the first 7 months. The RFQ states the optional tasks are for months 10 – 61. The cost spreadsheet lists 4 option periods for 13 months each (months 10 – 61). We understand that Task 7 should be addressed as 4 option periods of 13 months each. Is this correct?

   What the question refers to as Task 7 is the unnumbered bullet titled "Optional Tasks" listed below and separate from task 6 on page 4 of 10, J.11 Instructions.

   No. For optional tasks, as indicated at line number 50 of the spreadsheet, Attachment J.4, leave pricing for the base year and option years blank. Pricing for optional tasks will be secured by task order will be negotiated in accordance with the hourly rate table you should complete. The hourly rate table is at columns T through Y, lines 1 through 11 of the spreadsheet. The "Optional Tasks" will be used at the Governments discretion as an optional requirement to maintain and sustain the system in the first 9 months. During option years, ExIm may continue development of the data warehouse and ETL tools, to include other systems, throughout the contract term (potentially through month 57). The "option years" (i.e. CLIN 002 option 1) will be used at the Government's discretion to extend the terms of the contract in 12 month increments.

   The RFQ is amended via Amendment 003 to replace the references of 13 month periods of performance (Ex: M10 – M22) and 61 month to total period (Ex: M1 – M61) identified in the price spreadsheet, Attachment J.4. Amendment 003 also revises target dates to refer to 9 month base and 12 month option periods, for a total of 57 months term. The proposal submission instructions, Attachment J.11 at page 4 are revised to reference a 9 month base period rather than a 7 month base period.

8. The Government lists key personnel of "Contracting Official for the contract" in sect H.9(g) of the RFQ. The contractors' understanding is that this is a contracts administration position. This resource would not represent the contractor at the government's site or be involved in the project delivery. Typical duties of this resource would include:

    a. Maintain official copies of contractual documents at the contractor site.
    b. Prepare and submit invoices.
    c. Point of contact for modifications to contractual documents from the Government.
    d. Payment collection or payment questions from the Government.

Yes. While on site project management may perform some of these functions, our desire is to have a single point of contact for contractual matters.